

# Untold Italy Episode 203: Capri - Disappointed or Delighted?

This is the Untold Italy Travel podcast, and you're listening to episode number 203.

Ciao a tutti and Benvenuti to Untold Italy, the travel podcast, where you go to the towns and villages, mountains and lakes, hills and coastlines of Bella Italia. Each week your host Katy Clarke takes you on a journey in search of magical landscapes of history, culture, wine, gelato, and, of course, a whole lot of pasta. If you're dreaming of Italy and planning future adventures there, you've come to the right place.

## Katy

Ciao a tutti. Hope you're all well, dreaming of islands in the Italian sun and sipping a cheeky limoncello spritz! I know I am! so today I thought we'd head back to one of Italy's most famous islands and explore what it takes to have the best time ever there.

Of course, I'm talking about Capri! Island of dreams for many but sadly perhaps some people who visited there recently, perhaps, didn't have the best time. There's been quite a bit of commentary about that on our Italy Travel Planning Facebook community so I thought I'd ask my friend Holly, who has lived on the island for many years, to share her tips on ensuring your trip to Capri meets your expectations.

But first some context... Capri is a small island with around 7000 residents. In the peak of summer over 20,000+ visitors a day arrive on the island and you can imagine the chaos that can cause. It's probably not so Insta-worthy unless you have a solid plan.

So let's pause for a moment and consider, with Holly's help, how to visit her beautiful island home thoughtfully so you can enjoy the jaw-dropping beauty that has attracted visitors for centuries and go home delighted, not disappointed.

## Katy

Bentornata, Holly. Welcome back again to The Untold Italy Podcast. How are you?

## Holly

I am wonderful and very, very happy to be back here again. Thank you so much, Katy, for welcoming me back, and for everybody on The Untold Italy Podcast who listens along. We were so happy this year to welcome many of you also to our Garden Villa and Anacapri, which made us extra happy.

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## **Katy**

Yeah, it's so beautiful there. Just absolutely magical. Okay, so, of course, many of our listeners know you very well from previous episodes, but perhaps you could do a quick introduction for our newer listeners about who you are and what you are doing on Magical, beautiful Capri.

## **Holly**

Yes, I recall, obviously, before that we recorded a podcast about how I ended up an Australian in Capri. Long, very long story short, I had a three-day holiday. In fact, actually, this year we celebrated our 10-year anniversary of our first meeting, which is a big milestone. I met my husband, Gianluca D'Esposito. He was at the time, running a restaurant called Michel'angelo in the center of Capri. And I spoke no Italian, he spoke no English. And on my second night of a three-night stay in Capri, I dined at his restaurant. And I can't explain it still to this day, I can't explain what happened that evening or when we first caught eyes, locked eyes, I guess, that we felt like we knew each other without speaking. And somehow, from that evening to now, we have two children. We are married. We live on the island year-round. And we still to this day, both pinch ourselves that we trusted our hearts from that very first meeting. And next year, so next year in 2024, we'll celebrate our 10-year wedding anniversary. We were married quite quickly. Like I said, we trusted our hearts. And that just changed our whole life direction.

## **Holly**

So I've then pretty much moved to Capri soon thereafter. I, by marriage, inherited a restaurant, something I knew very little about because at the time I was, well, I first practiced as a solicitor, and then I started my own business doing corporate advisory services. And to go from that to then working on a restaurant in a country and a culture and everything that I was unfamiliar with, was an experience, but something that we did together and we love it. So we are still to this day working in hospitality, albeit we closed our restaurant. The restaurant was very sentimental to Gianluca. It was called Michel'angelo because Michel was the name of his father, and he's now with The Angels. He was a chef on the island, and him and his brother had opened the restaurant in memory of their father. I think I may have mentioned in the podcast before that what is also beautiful is that when I walked through that door, and it was the first of June 2013, Gianluca said, I obviously later told me after I'm married, I think he said that he felt that his father had sent me.

## Holly

The restaurant to him was very sentimental, and we actually closed the restaurant at the end of our 12-year lease. We knew we were already closing. Unfortunately, the whole year, at least, timed with the pandemic, so we were closing in 2020. However, we were prepared because we already knew and we had decided to venture down the path of more, I guess, in-depth experiences, but also down the path of nature. And I'll talk a little bit about it later because we are growing our own food and we host a whole range of food experiences where travelers can come and get an insight into really what daily life is like on the islands. So we hold food experiences from cooking classes, private and group, to degustation dining, to gelato and sorbet workshops, to limoncello making workshops to cheese and wine and extra virgin olive oil tastings, gourmet picnics, catering, everything. So we do everything food. But I guess with a touch of love, obviously, as Gianluca will say, amore, the most important ingredient in his dishes. And yeah, we just love what we do. And we love welcoming people to show them a different side to island life, I guess, island living.

## Holly

So we do that in our little sanctuary, little paradise away from the hustle bustle of Capri Town in Anacapri Town. We're in Anacapri, the top of the island. And yeah, come and seek us out.

## Katy

Yeah, it's a really beautiful spot, and I was lucky enough to stick my head in there last year.

## Katy

I think Capri is one of those places that people have seen so many photos about and obviously dream about. We're going to explore a little bit today whether the dream meets the reality. But I just first wanted to mention, though, that if anyone wants to hear the full, unedited version of Holly and Gianluca's love story, they can go to episode number 42, which is where Holly tells the full story, which is really beautiful. I do encourage you to do that.

## Katy

But back to the topic at hand. Capri is a place that people dream about going to, and maybe for a long time they've seen a lot of things on Instagram. They might even follow Holly. They may see these beautiful, rocky outcrop islands surrounded by these amazingly colored blue seas. But unfortunately, what we've heard a bit this year is, I know I have, I don't know about you, Holly, but people have been maybe a little bit disappointed with their experience

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because when they've arrived, it's been like a really crowded ferry and difficult to get around when they get there.

### **Katy**

And so maybe people have come on a day trip and they've been stuck at the port for most of the day. We really wanted to have a chat with Holly about meeting expectations when we go to Capri and maybe how to approach a visit to the island. You can really experience what this magical place is like, a place that enticed Emperors to move there to uproot themselves from the riches of Rome and totally decamp to a little island. There is a reason for that, and it probably is not found at 11:00 AM on a Tuesday morning in June at Marina Grande when you're waiting for the funicular. What do you think, Holly?

### **Holly**

I guess maybe the first thing I'd say is that you get out what you put in to every experience. And I think the most important thing is to align your expectations when you visit the island. And I'd also say the most important thing is to plan. But I'll get back to that later because I think some of the most important thing is to realize why you do visit Capri. What is the reason to visit Capri? What are you coming for? And if you give me a chance, I'll explain to you my favorite things about the island, because literally, I too, also came probably a little bit too unprepared these days, especially in 2023/24, coming into next season. Look, the demand and the amount of international travel is back on a different level. And I think I definitely couldn't have probably done the same trip that I did back then 10 years ago now and had the same outcome. Well, especially, who knows? I don't know if I would be married with two kids. But I would say, okay, maybe I'll start just to explain why Capri has become loved by so many, why it has the international appeal, why it is such a destination that's sought after to come and visit.

### **Holly**

And for me, the very best thing I've got to say, is that it's the nature. It's like the reason that, like you said, you mentioned the Emperors, the Roman Empire, etc, it's the reason why people have been visiting here since even before Christ. So the ancient Greeks were here first, and then the Roman Empire, and then from then on, a whole range of—and I'll talk about the history later because it's another point—people have come and been drawn to the island's beauty. And I'll just say, look, albeit we have a strong connection to the nature, like I said, we are now running our garden-type activity where we're growing our own food, et cetera. But from a holistic perspective, outside of our garden, you've got crystal clear,

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shimmering sea, dramatic limestone cliffs, dramatic rock formations like the Natural Arc, and of course, the epic three rock formations that extend from the sea, the Faraglioni rocks, where, as many people would know, if you've gone on a boat to around the island, you will generally sail through that Lover's Arch in the middle of the second Faraglioni, and Legend has it, kiss for everlasting love. But look, there's pinewood forest, there's hikes, there's the mountainous terrain, there's the pebble beaches and the rock platform beaches, and of course, the Blue Grotto and all those other wondrous grottos that are dotted around the coastline.

## Holly

There's flora and fauna that's unique to the island. The scarring lizards, the famous blue lizard of the Faraglioni rocks, the mountain goats. I don't know, I'm sure I must have mentioned it in a podcast before. The carpi, in fact, in Italian, means goats. There is still some mountain goats here that you can spot on the Monte Solaro or up in Villa Jovis at the top there. There's numerous bird varieties on their migratory paths. Of course, there's some very big seagulls. And I can assure you, my kids have had to beware of their panini down at the beach. Besides this, the Mediterranean shrubs, the olive trees, the blooming bougainvillea, the wisteria, hydrangeas, geraniums, everything is just so colorful. There's a light and a vibrancy here that I just can't explain. I must admit, in my life before I met Gianluca, I didn't spend so much time out amongst nature. I always loved nature, but I was in an office a lot of the time. Now I spend a lot more time outside, and I appreciate the beauty so much more. I think another thing I would say is besides the lemon groves, which, of course, Cari is very known for, but the scents of the herbs, the fragrance margarana, like the marjoram.

## Holly

The marjoram is actually that herb that grows wild on the island. That's one of the secret ingredients for the ravioli Caprese. But the herbs are just amazing. We have the basil. When you freshly tear that basil, the sage, the rosemary, the lavender, thyme. It's just like for me, I just never imagined that nature would have such an impact on my life. I just can't explain how I have changed my outlook from being able to appreciate how naturally, wonders this island is. That's the first thing I have to say.

## Katy

It's like a delight for the senses. And you can do these layers, as you're saying, like you've got that visual impact of the sea and the and the mountain. Then you've got that other layer of the scent coming through and just the lemon and all the herbs. I remember last year when we were walking through Anacapri, just through the back streets to get back to our hotel, and we

didn't see a soul, really. The flowers are blooming down the streets. Then we could see the lizards scamper across the street. It's actually when I talk to my kids about the time that we spent there last year, that's what they remember. They remember the lizards. They remember them a lot. They're really cute. They're quite big, actually. Yeah, just that nature has got a funny way of making its point, doesn't it?

## Holly

Yeah. I love also that you said that you were walking in Anacapri and that you didn't see us all. Because that's very interesting as well. You were here in summer. And again, getting back to the reason or anecdotally why some people may have not experienced what they were expecting to experience this year is that you also need to plan for the time you are coming and where you are going to spend your time on the island to get the most out of it. And 100%, I can tell you this, it doesn't matter if you're coming in the peak of summer when there is, reportedly, up to 20,000-25,000 people visiting a day. There are always places on the island where you will, if you know where they are and you know to seek them out and you've researched them, that you can go where you want. You will feel like the island is yours. Do you know what I mean? There's always these places. It's a matter of what you're coming to Capri for. Yes, nature is the first one, and I can talk about that later. There are so many different hikes. I'll talk about a beautiful destination a little later down on the way back from Monte Solaro.

## Holly

It's called the Cetrella Valley. Remind me because I'm going to get back to that because it's such a beautiful location with the most epic view. I recently went there last month. After being here for 10 years—I can't believe it, 10 years—I finally had the opportunity to... There's a little church there and it's called the Hermitage of Santa Maria, I think. And basically, this church is not open very often to the public, but I went in there and that was an experience. It's indescribable. I can only just say it was something out of this world. The church is built on a cliff, and it has a view over the whole of the island, and you feel how special it is when you walk in. Okay, so nature. Talking about nature. Nature is the first one. Second one, history. I know not everyone's a history buff. I understand that. However, it's hard not to visit Capri without understanding its rich cultural history because it actually makes the island what it is today. Importantly, and I'm sure many people will know that the Roman Empire was ruled from Capri by Emperor Tiberius, who came here for the last 10 years of his life.

## Holly

They say that he was responsible for constructing 12 villas on the island. At the moment, just two of those are open to the public Villa Jovis, which is in Capri, the top of Mount Tiberio, which is in Capri Town - pedestrian Capri that you can walk up to, and it's a museum, so you can pay to enter and walk around or get a local licensed guide. Or you could go to Damecuta, which they say was Emperor Tiberius's summer residence, which is actually not too far from our residence and has a beautiful view of the sunset. So he knew where to put his villas, construct his villas.

## Katy

They sure did know. They knew everything. We know nothing. We're just copying.

## Holly

Very true. And then after the Roman Empire, there were so many different influences on the island here. There were the Normans, the Turkish pirates, the English and the French battled over the island. I guess really, when you come to modern-day Capri, what was it that put Capri on the map? There was two things. Number one, it was the rediscovery of the Blue Grotto. So that was in 1826, so almost 200 years ago, when it was rediscovered. When it was rediscovered, it actually put Capri on the map in a number of ways, because at the time, there was The Grand Tour. And the intellectuals and the elites were traveling on The Grand Tour. And The Grand Tour has stopped at Naples. Actually, these visitors who were the first day trippers to Capri. But we'll talk about day tripping in a little bit. But yeah, they would come across. They would go into the Blue Grotto. And which, again, you need to know the reason why it is so famous and important to Capri's history. Not only it was rediscovered and put Capri on the map in modern day era, but at the time of the Roman Empire, it was said to have been Emperor Tiberius's lymphium, and it was actually adorned, they say, with 12 Sea God statues.

## Holly

In 1964, two Caprese divers went down, and they actually extracted four of them from the seabed floor of the Blue Grotto. In Anacapri, you can view them in Casa Rossa, which is a museum. They've now done a light show where they talk about the history of these four Sea God statues and the Blue Grotto in general. So very interesting history that the Blue Grotto has. But also the people came very first and what put a copy on the map? The Blue Grotto, and they came to see the Roman ruins. So now I would say in 2023, people come to see the

Blue Grotto, but not so many people come to see the Roman ruins, which is, I guess, a feature of the changing, I guess, way people are traveling. But in fact, that is probably one of the most important things and important sights to see on the island, that the Roman Empire was ruled from Capri. I think it's something that people should definitely spend some time reading about and knowing and understanding before they come.

## **Katy**

Holly, there's a lot of Roman history podcasts out there, and I'm going to actually dig around and see if someone's actually done an episode on that, because I know there's probably someone Tiberius, for sure. I'll have a dig around and we'll see... I think I was thinking of doing an episode on my favorite nerd out history podcast. I'll dig it out and I'll send it to you and I'll let everyone know because I feel like you're so right. It's not just one thing. I think we've become a little bit one-dimensional, like that we want to get those photos. Yes, everyone's the same. I'm guilty as charged. I want the hot photos as well, the beautiful, perfect sea, the dress. We want to make everyone jealous. But you know what? There's more to it than that. I think that's what Holly is trying to say, is that you've got this amazing background. But like everywhere, it's got a story to tell and thousands of years of stories in the history of this island. It's really fascinating. I'm going to dig out those history podcasts for you too.

## **Holly**

Well, I guess history also leads on to culture as well. There is a rich, Caprese culture here, and I think a lot of people might get lost up in the fact that I've heard many times that we just described on the island as just a tourist resort or there's hardly any locals there. Well, sorry, I don't know. I would beg to differ. There's over 14,000 residents of the island year round. We live here year round. Our children go to school on the island. There is a local community here that celebrates still their customs and traditions with or without the many travelers that are visiting. But I would urge you to definitely research before you come to see if any of those beautiful traditional ceremonies or processions etc, that they are holding here, whether you could be a part of them or whether you could see them. Because it's also an important part when you visit anywhere in the world that you're experiencing the local traditions and customs. What I would say is, regardless of the fact that they're right in the middle of summer and there's thousands of people arriving, they still celebrate here very much.



## Holly

The patron saints of Capri and Anacapri, San Costanzo, is on the 14th of May. San Antonio in Anacapri is on the 13th of June, and they will hold big processions for both of those. And other festivals are held, local festivals. So September in Anacapri, where they actually celebrate the agricultural origins, especially in Anacapri. So back in the day when they would be making wine and the olive oil, etc, etc. And there's lots of things to do and there's lots of activity.

## Holly

The Chesnut Festival, one of my favorites. That's the time that I got to go up into that beautiful church in the Cetrella Valley. The Cetrella Valley is only accessible by foot, but the whole community, you get on these chair lifts, hop up to the very top of the island, and then walk down, make sure you've got comfortable shoes. I'll recommend that very much so. But when you get down to the Cetrella Valley, it's just magical. It's like you've got the view of the Faraglioni, you're up on a beautiful, you're cliffside, you're in this beautiful picnic area. Oh, my gosh, it's just stunning. And then you've got the church there and an abandoned solar observatory.

## Holly

I can't explain it. The things that you just have to see to believe sometimes. Besides that, other cultural events, if you get an opportunity to see the folk dancing here, I know I spoke about this in the Christmas in Calfree episode with you, Katie, but the Tarantella folk dancing is just something. It's just vibrant. They wear these amazing colors. They've got the tambourines. And look, you often see them in the summer season, running between wedding celebrations, because I do a lot of wedding celebrations. But also, that's another thing I would say for people to seek out, is the commune does have a big celebratory... They have a calendar of events, and many times people aren't aware of the calendar and where to find it. But yeah, if you ask your hotel concierge or etc, there are a number of things: musical concerts, theaters, plays, concerts in the piazza that are going on. Often you will see a concert in the piazz with the Tarantella, the folk band. Again, it's something that I would say is a beautiful part of the tradition of Capri on the island.

## Holly

So yeah, I think it's on the first, the evening of the first of January every year, they have the folk festival where all the folk bands of the island perform.

## Holly

And that's one of my favorite days of the year. So, yes, there's still a very big cultural customs and traditions that are celebrated on the island that I urge that people would seek out and understand. There's also a new organization, who they're holding more events to open different cultural aspects to the public. So, for example, private villas, and they have guided tours on special dates. And important just to seek out things that, like I said, if you're coming for a day trip and everyone's coming all at the one time, seek out things that are different. You know what I mean? You need to know where to go in the times of when there are less people all concentrated in one area. So we've done nature, history. We've talked about the culture and customs and the traditions, architecture and design.

## Holly

You could just come here and stroll the streets just to see how beautiful the architecture is. And we talked about the Roman villas, but there's also the next wave of modern tourism and modern life on the island where people came and settled and built these amazing villas, such as Villa San Michele, built by the Swedish physician Axel Munthe and the Villa Lysis, Casa Rossa. These are publicly accessible villas that you can go and buy a ticket and go in as museums. And they're, look at the details, look at the ceramic tiles, the natural light, the arches, the statues. It's just like... It's something just unique. The island has a very unique style in so many senses, and that will lead to the next one, fashion and shopping. A lot of people will say, Oh, it's all just high-end shopping. It's all high-end boutiques. Well, no, again, that's a misconception. There is still people on the island performing their crafts. And you've got ceramic makers, we have the sandal makers. There are people still on the island making different clothing, jewelry, etc. So I think, yes, Capri, specifically, less so in Anacapri, people seem to be attracted to the big name brands, luxury designer brands. But I would say that's not just Capri. Wander off to the little cobbles laneways one way or the other way, and you'll come across a little cute locally run boutique making beautiful whatever it might be that floats your boat. I don't go shopping frequently. When I do, I think about it a lot because I'm thinking about like, How am I supporting the island?

## Holly

And I do like to support definitely I like to support the local artisans along with locally run stores, etc. So fashion and shopping, yes, 100 % reason to visit Capri. Everybody knows the piazza is the living room of the world. You sit there to people-watch. It's like the chairs are all positioned so that they're outward-looking and everyone's enjoying their aperitivo with a spot of people watching.

**Katy**

Do you need to book?

**Holly**

No, in the piazza, no. In the piazza, obviously, it's busier at different times. Aperitivo hour is busy. During the daytime, it's busy, but it's different again. It really depends. And again, I'm going to quickly go through the last reasons why I'm saying you should visit Capri, what should be your expectation. But also I'll talk about the timing of when you go places so that then hopefully that you're not caught up in crowds and you're getting the best of your visit to the island. But I'll quickly run through that.

**Holly**

I'll say that, look, the food on the island, I've talked about that in episode 160. Capri has a lot of international influence. However, there are dishes that are island-born and they are still enjoyed in Caprese, causes. And as you would know, we have a cooking school, and of course, we teach how to make many of these dishes. Or if you want, you can come and just enjoy them and get Gianluca to cook them for you.

**Holly**

And of course, people come to visit because of the hype. I know popular culture, the social media, the nightlife, the perception of Capri being an island of VIPs etc.

**Holly**

So I will say, look, that's definitely a part of what I feel many people are coming to visit, but it should really be one part. Like I've just already prefaced, there are so many other reasons why Capri is a destination that people have fallen in love with for the popular culture and nightlife, of course, a lot of people are attracted also to that, and that's equally understandable. So what would I say? So there are all of the reasons why you should come to Capri.

**Holly**

This year, we had mixed reviews. Some people love their time on the island. Some people have been coming back every single year for the last 20, 30 years. And then there's other

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people who may have visited for a day and didn't get that same experience or didn't have that same attraction. And this can be for many reasons. It's the same. I worry, when I recommend people, like if people ask me, Where should I eat on the island? And I'm like, Well, that depends what you're after. So the important thing is you've got to know what you're after first. Are you after a sea view or a fine dining? Is it all about food? Do you want local cuisine? Do you want a trattoria or do you want this? It's the same concept. What are you coming to the island for? Then you understand what you want to get out of it. So I would say this. I think firstly, there's a misconception that the island is extremely expensive in terms of accommodation-wise. Yes, there's a price, but there's a price to travel anywhere in Italy these days, anywhere in the world. It depends on what you, again, are seeking from your accommodation. There are B&Bs that obviously there's Airbnb, there's villas, private villas. You've got the 5-star luxury hotels. You've got moderate one-star hotels. I guess for me, I believe that there is a bit of a misconception that Capri is expensive to stay the night. I say that depending upon where you're staying, it's no more expensive than other coastal, especially in the summer, high-season rates, they're pretty much consistent across the Amalfi Coast. For me, I don't feel like that Capri is in any way outpriced from the Amalfi Coast, is what I'm trying to say.

### **Katy**

The challenge in Capri is it's probably going to get booked up quicker because there's less of it. But I mean, Positano itself is very small, isn't it? I feel like people are expecting, I don't know, Jamaica or something. It's a very big island, but it's a really small island and there's levels of different accommodation for everyone. But you need to be a bit organized, don't you?

### **Holly**

100 %. Yes. Organization is the key, researching, planning, and I would say adjusting your expectations. For example, if you wanted to stay on the island for a different budget, understand that you could find something that's more accommodating from a budget perspective in an area not so close to the city center, but you will have to walk. I mean, it is a pedestrian island, so you have to understand that where you are located may mean that you might need to walk further. I guess when you're putting it into perspective, you have to work out and adjust your expectations. Are you willing to pay less for accommodation, but more on different things, and planning your trip so that it meets your expectations? That's all about research, I think. You can't just wing Capri. You can't just arrive in Italy and go, You know

what? I'm going to go do a day trip to Capri without actually understanding where you're visiting because it's a unique destination.

### **Katy**

It's really a bit sad. I mean, gone are the days... I mean, you did use to wing it in your travels, didn't you? I think, unfortunately, we're at a situation where, which I think is great, is travel has been democratized, but with it's become a lot of challenges that we need to own - as travelers ourselves. Because flights and the ease of getting around is so much easier than when I first started traveling, when you had to go and take a day off work to get a visa to go through various countries, change all the different currencies and try and figure out with your limited maths ability how it all relates back to... Everything is so much easier, but I think it's made us a little bit less aware of what's going on around us. I think Capri is an excellent example, like Santorini, like Dubrovnik, Venice. These places, they're so popular for a reason, but I think it's incumbent on us to really take stock and think about how we're going to approach our visits there.

### **Holly**

Yeah, 100 %. I think it's important that travelers take responsibility while they're traveling and for their travels, as well as think about sustainability at each step of your travels. Like I said, again, day-tripping to Capri in the three peak summer months puts a lot of stress both on the island but also on the traveler, because you're not getting that same experience because you're arriving at the same time as so many other people who all have the same expectation to see such a, yes, a small island, but a big island in terms of how many things there are to see, the impact or the experiences you can have on the island. And to see that in only a couple of short hours is unrealistic.

### **Holly**

I would say that that also needs to be factored into your planning, is the fact that you need to pick why, number one, we've talked about why you would come to Capri. What do you want to come to Capri for? And then find out how you can do that in your time frame that you are on the island. I've heard many people who say, Oh, look, you don't need to... They'll do a boat trip around the island. You don't need to go see Capri. Why? Sorry. It's going around the island, it's not visiting Capri. So I strongly urge to go and visit the island. And I understand not everybody has the budget or the timeframe in their itinerary to visit overnight. However, I'm going to stress that really to get a feel for the island, you do need to stay, I would recommend, as a minimum, at least 2-3 nights. But I understand that not everyone can do

that for whatever, varying reasons. However, again, you have a different feeling, a different experience on the island if you are seeing it after day trippers have gone, so after the last boats, the ferries leave for the day, when the people will come out from their hotels and all their luxury yachts, and it's quite glamorous, and everyone is sitting there having their aperitivo, and just enjoying Dolce Vita. Isn't that the reason why people come to Italy? It's just, it is a beautiful feeling. It's elegant, it's glamorous, and I enjoy it. Albeit, I don't get to go out very often anymore, but I.

## **Katy**

I don't get to go out that much either, except when I'm in Capri. I think if you really want to splurge, let's face it, it's the place to splurge, for sure. There are some amazing hotels there. You can have that luxury experience if that's your jam. No judgment here. Well, I could tell you a few stories from my last trip. There's a time and a place for everything, and it's how you want to spend your hard-earned coins, then that's completely up to you. Everyone has got a decision to make. But I think what Holly is saying is that you can make a decision and you're going to be compromising somewhere. So if you decide to come on a day trip, you might be compromising your experience in a number of different ways. And if you decide to stay, then you're compromising because you won't be able to stay somewhere else, probably. Unfortunately, I think we all want to have it all. We want to have the trip that has everything in it, but at some point, we got to choose. And you know what? The best thing about Italy, in my opinion, is there's no wrong choice, really.

## **Holly**

Also, I say the best part of the fun is a lot of time, the planning and the build-up, the excitement before you go on the trip. It's actually fun to research why you want to visit somewhere and what experience you want to take out of it. So a bit of the unknown also those people who continue to visit the island every year, they love the known, do you know what I mean? I always say that there's some things in Capri that sometimes I feel like that Capri is a little bit of a time warp, but it's also the beauty of it. I mean, it's island life. I still think it's so beautiful that you have the convertible taxis, etc, that that's characteristically Capri. But the paparazzi that will walk past and you're walking in the square and take a photo, and you can actually still go and buy a printed photo of yourself. These days, everything's on your phone, everything's digital. And those memories really... There's a lot of sentiment here. And I think it's a beautiful thing too. But look, book early, research plan, adjust your expectations, understand what you're coming to Capri for.

## Holly

I'll say, Be flexible. Sorry, there's one thing I definitely have to raise is that we can't control the weather. And yes, we're an island. We are an island, an outdoor island. An outdoor island, when I say a lot of the things to see on the island are outdoors. I've got to say that pinning there comes into things, and you've got to be flexible. May this year, a while ago, that was very characteristic. It rained. It was windy. There were days without boats, but it's still in peak summer season. No one could have picked that it was going to be that weather pattern for such a long period of time as well. It wasn't just like a day or two. It was like a couple of weeks of raining. And people had to adjust their expectations. There are times boats were canceled, so you didn't get to do the boat trips around the island. But what can you experience? Can't be in the rain? Well, you need to adjust. That's when you seek out the shopping, the restaurants, the course, our cooking classes. But I will say you need to be prepared for that too, because we actually did have many people who called for last-minute cooking classes. But unfortunately, we're a local business that actually we take a lot of reservations well in advance. So if we've got a private experience, we can't add in other guests. So it is what it is. There's only two of us. It's just Gianluca and Holly. Gianluca's our chef. We need him.

## Katy

You're doing a magnificent job. But this is the other thing as well. And I think people also we have a big Facebook group with a lot of people in it. I think it's hit over 130,000 people now. For somehow, we've always been talking about you need to have experiences. Don't just have this bucket list of you want to see. Now it's almost become like a bucket list of experiences. It's like, I have to do a cooking class or I have to do a golf cart tour. It's like, Well, stop. What do you want to learn to cook? If you want to cook carbonara, do your cooking class in Rome. If you want to learn tortellini, you need to go to Bologna or Emilia, Romania, and learn, if you want to go and Torte Caprese, then you go to Holly and Gian Luca, for sure. There is a myriad of dishes that they can teach you, which are all delicious. But I think people have just got this, I've got to do a cooking class when I'm in Italy, and tick, tick, tick. I think we just need to just really go back to our roots and just find out what it is that we love.

## Katy

For example, I love baby goats, so that's what I like to seek out, the goat's cheese farm. I like cheese. I'm always going for a cheese. I love beautiful places that move me. Even though I'm not religious, a couple of episodes ago, we were talking about Assisi, which is an amazingly spiritual place, even if you're not religious like me. Then there's another place that's actually

also dedicated to St. Francis. It might be a thing happening, which is up in Lake Orta, in Piemonte, and that's also a very spiritual place. I feel like I'm responsible that I feel bad about it. But we just all need to try and relax into our trip a bit more and let's go for those experiences that we really want to have, but have that flexibility, as you say, Holly, to adjust and adapt. And it's usually when you do that, that's when the best things happen anyway, I find.

## Holly

Okay, can I just say I'm only going to finish on this note. My trip to Capri, again, I say I don't know if I would ever have had that same experience that I had 10 years ago now, just given the changing platform of the world and global travel. However, I would say that I went on that trip. I don't know if I mentioned in the first podcast. I was in Australia. I felt like I was a bit stuck in a rut, and I just decided to book a return ticket. I had, I think it was six or eight weeks in Italy with no itinerary. I had no itinerary. I only had the very first night booked in Milan. That's it. Then I woke up in the morning and I was like, Where to first? I'll reiterate this because it's just I believe so many things that - even when I say it I pinch myself like, about how my life has changed in such a short period of time and how dramatically it has changed, I was never even supposed to come to Capri. Actually, I was four weeks into the trip and literally someone had said to me, Why don't you go and visit Ischia?

## Holly

And I thought, Okay, I'd never heard of it, and I'd never heard of Capri. So sorry. All the things I'm telling you to do, like to research and to plan, etc, etc, come out of experience. I didn't. I didn't research. I now know that, and especially again, because it's a different world that we do need to do these things. But back then, I didn't. So what did I do? I put Ischia into Google. What came up was the Faraglioni rocks. And I didn't know that they weren't in Ischia. And I just went, Wow, what are these rocks? These are the three epic rocks that extend from the sea and that have such an impact on Capri and the viewpoints, etc. Anyway, I clicked on them and it went through to the Hotel, Hotel Luna in Capri Town. This is how it all began. I called them. I just looked at this website and I was like, Oh, my gosh, this just looks something like out of the backdrop to a film set. I've got to call this place. I wonder if they have any availability. I'd still at this stage didn't know that they weren't in Ischia. I called them and I said, Hi, do you have any availability? And they said, Actually, we just had a cancelation. If you come tomorrow, then we've got three nights. And so then I said, Well, what's the address in Ischia? And they go, Oh, no, we're in Capri. I was like, Okay, well, I'll go there too. I just think those moments of destiny where you've got flexibility, they literally changed my life. I



ended up in Capri. I'm not on the island I thought I was going to. And it was there. Also, I, of course, hadn't booked my meals or anything. So that's how it came to be that actually, Luigi, the bar manager, I'm sure I told you that in the first podcast, recommended that I dine at Michelangelo. I just believe in some things are meant to be. I believe that there is destino. And if you open your mind and your heart, and that's what travel does. It opens your mind and it opens your heart to new things. And I think I don't know, but Gianucca and I just felt like it was... I still to this day, I just say it felt like we knew each other but couldn't communicate that.

### **Holly**

But when I say you couldn't communicate that language, I say a 100%. His beautiful smile and the food and everything, that is communication. Absolutely.

### **Katy**

Now, I think if we're talking about destino, because I'm all about destino as well. In fact, I know someone who's got a tattoo, he's French, he's got 'destin' on it. We're bonded over there. But it's basically if you want the destino and the Eat, Pray, Love moments, which is basically what you've had, let's face it, is that back to planning, you're not going to find that in peak season. You're not going to find that from May to October in Capri. Maybe you'll find it at a different time of year. But if you can't wing these things anymore, unfortunately. There, these are the places where you can wing it. It's just the reality. But like Holly said, when you get there, you can certainly find places that are out of the way and that you can get your own little peace and solitude and find your own little moment of happiness, whichever that might be.

### **Holly**

Definitely with that, and on a very last note, depending upon the time of year you're traveling, of course, then that's when you need to really take more attention to your planning. Because yes, in the summer season, yes, it's very, very busy on the island. It's extremely busy. But that is like with all summer coastal destinations. In the winter, again, taking back traveling responsibly and sustainably, we live here year-round. It is a destination to visit year-round. I did mention this in the Christmas in Capri. Again, it comes down to your expectations. What do you want out of the island? Because if you're coming for the nature, I can assure you, like I said, it was only last month that I was up in that beautiful church and talking about spiritual experiences. That was one for me. This was in November, and I was so excited to see that church open. I just say, look, in winter, it depends on what you're coming

from. I always say, if you're an author or you're an artist, if you came here in the autumn and winter, you would be creatively inspired on another level. There is something for everyone, and that means also considering Capri outside of the peak times, not for everybody because a lot is closed.

**Holly**

But that again comes down to what you're going to Capri for. Are you going for the restaurants, the vibe, the nightlife, the shopping, etc? Well, that's not year-round, and you have to factor that into when you plan your trip.

**Katy**

But you can always get pasta. I mean.

**Holly**

Yeah, I can tell you one thing. We're open year-round, and we've already got a number of reservations during the Christmas and New Year period, and we cannot wait because we are so excited to welcome people into our garden villa and into our island to Anacapri in a time that's not so common that people travel. It makes me even happier because I want to show everybody what's so beautiful about the island in winter - because for me, it's something that people are missing out on.

**Katy**

Holly, thank you, Grazie Mille. I'm so proud to have you on our podcast championing your adopted home in such a wonderful way. I really think it's so important to be more of how we spend our short time on this planet and you lead by example every step of the way. Brava.

**Holly**

To be honest, I would say not only do I love the island as being my adopted home, but we have two beautiful children who are being raised on the island, and we also want to see for them a future that's, number one, sustainable, and then also so that future generations of all the travelers in the world who want their children and grandchildren to visit the island, that it's still going to be a destination for generations and generations to come. It's just so important to respect when, how, and in what ways you visit any destination in the world, not just an island is even more so because it's got an ecosystem that's unique.

*Untold Italy travel podcast transcript. [Visit our website](#) for show notes and all episodes*

## **Katy**

And it's so beautiful, and everyone deserves to see and experience it one day. So now listen, I know many people tuning in will want to stay in touch with you and tap into your idyllic Capri. I can highly recommend Holly's Instagram, but you do have some other ways that people can stay in touch, don't you?

## **Holly**

Oh, yes. Thank you, Katy. Yes, please follow along on Instagram. We're at michelangelo\_capri. There, I'm doing a lot of Insta stories. I show a little bit of insight into our life on the island, not just the food, but also our garden, our daily lives, some beautiful sunsets, sunrises, if I'm up early enough. That doesn't happen that often. Instagram, definitely. I would say check us out on our website. We're literally just launching our website. This is exciting news. We're actually launching a new website. Next week, we are opening our reservations for 2024. Next week on our new website at [www.giardinodicapri.com](http://www.giardinodicapri.com). It's exciting for us. We are doing a completely new website, a refresh, and we're also having a new booking system. We've redesigned our food experiences for next year, so we're going to do a lot more group activities so that we can have more people to welcome more people, and also people can meet other people and other travelers with like-minded love for Capri. So we're going to be doing some long table garden dining experiences along with our usual cooking classes, private and group and workshops, etc. So definitely check us out on our new website.

## **Holly**

We're very excited about it. And of course, in the lead-up to Christmas, we also sell a whole range of our own production, goodies, gourmet goodies, artisan, beautiful sauces, tomato sauces, our soft olios, our vegetables, organic vegetables, our olive oil, extra virgin olive oil. We've got wine, we have pasta, everything. And we send you along a video demonstration of how you can cook along at home to make a beautiful, celebratory meal. Yeah, so if you're stuck for Christmas gifts or you've got an Italophile in your life, most definitely think of us and come and check out our products and our website. You can see our new website.

## **Katy**

And it's all delicious, I have to say. So Grazie Mille Holly. Let's chat again very soon. Congratulations on all the developments there at Michel'angelo Capri and Giardino di Capri.

## Holly

Yes, thank you. Thank you, Katy. Thank you to everyone for listening along. Please, if you book an experience, let us know if you're a podcast listener because we love meeting you when you come. Yes, most definitely let us know. Thank you very much. Ciao.

## Katy

Ciao. Ciao.

## Katy

I love Capri, though probably not as much as Holly does. There's something about the light, the natural wonders and floral and herbal fragrances wafting over you on a sea breeze that are absolutely bewitching.

To ensure our experiences there are delightful like this and do not involve being squashed into the funicular after a long wait, It's really up to all of us to be a bit more thoughtful about planning our trips there. Consider the season, where you'll stay, what you want to do and how you want to experience this beautiful island. Staying a little longer or overnight may mean you miss out on another place but like I always say, you can't go wrong in Italy. Make your choice, do your research and own it

In this way, we can help Capri and other popular destinations in Italy and around the world retain their charm for future generations and other visitors.

To learn more about Capri and find Holly's details at Capri Michelangelo and Giardino di Capri head on over to our show notes at [untolditaly.com/203](https://untolditaly.com/203) where you'll find links to her website and social media accounts for your daily Caprese fix.

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Next week on Untold Italy we're staying in southern Italy and discovering a city that's popular with English-speaking visitors in summer but attracts a big and celebratory Italian crown in the lead-up to Christmas.

But until then it's "ciao for now".